

CHINESE PLAY STAGED Repertory Society's Success

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

His Excellency Wang Yun the Prime Minister Tom McMinn
Madame Wang, of the Chen family, his wife Clara Clarke
Su, the Dragon General Roy Black
Wei, the Tiger General W. A. Blake
Golden Stream Katharine Cook
Silver Stream Patricia Trace
Precious Stream Ailsa Krimmer
Hsieh-Ping-Kuei Nigel Jackson

The Brisbane Repertory Theatre Society has every reason to be gratified with the success which attended the presentation by its players at the Princess Theatre, South Brisbane, on Saturday evening of "Lady Precious Stream," an old Chinese play, done into English according to its traditional style, by S. I. Hsiung. If the play, as staged, represented a triumph for Miss Barbara Sisley, the producer, it was no less a triumph for every player in the large cast of 35.

The play was presented in strict accordance with the conventions of the Chinese theatre, which, like the medieval English stage, has an almost complete absence of the properties and stage settings to which Occidental theatre audiences are accustomed. The audience had to furnish the bare boards of the stage with scenery and appurtenances from their own imaginations—an amusing and refreshingly novel experience, after the overcrowded assortment of property minutiae that Western playwrights employ. Actually, apart from a few Chinese placards and some chairs and stools, there was no attempt at stage decor. A mountain pass was represented by a canvas screen; the entry into a "room" was made realistic only by the player going through the motions of opening the non-existing door, and raising his feet eight inches off the ground to cross an imaginary door-sill. Two men with wooden swords represented an army; the general, in reviewing his troops, ascended to the mountain top by the simple device of mounting a chair and looking over a screen. The hero was shown to be mounted on a horse by the fact that he carried a riding whip, and the dumb-show actions of mounting and dismounting.

SIMPLICITY AND CHARM

Thus, the drama was reduced to the primitive essentials of speech and gesture, and the almost entire absence of adventitious aids, threw into high relief the simplicity and charm of the production, and the natural art of the actors.

The play opens with the Prime Minister, His Excellency Wang Yun, waddling importantly into the centre of the stage, to preside over a confer-

wadding importantly into the centre of the stage, to preside over a conference of the Wang family. Trotting submissively in his wake come Madame Wang and their two daughters, Golden Stream and Silver Stream, the respective wives of Su, the Dragon General, and Wei, the Tiger General, who make a dignified entry, with drooping moustaches, and hands tucked in the capacious sleeves of their mandarin gowns. The subject of the conference is the marriage of Wang's youngest daughter, Precious Stream, the apple of his eye. She rejects the noble and wealthy suitors her father has sponsored, and with the aid of Hsieh-Ping-Kuei, the humble gardener of the house of Wang, who is also a poet, and a lifter of heavy weights, she foils the marriage plan. She is cast forth from her family, but virtue triumphs in the end when Hsieh-Ping-Kuei becomes a king, and all ends well—except for Wang and Wei.

As Precious Stream, Miss Ailsa Krimmer, interpreted her role with a natural simplicity, and exhibited a charming restraint in situations where it would have been easy to over-act; Mr. Nigel Jackson adequately filled the role of the tall and stalwart Hsieh-Ping-Kuei; and highly competent performances were also given by Patricia Trace (Silver Stream), Daphne Francis (Princess of the Western Regions), and Tom McMinn (Wang Yun), Roy Black (Wei, the Tiger General), and Ludovic Gordon, who appeared in the dual role of an old suitor and Mu, the decrepit guardian of the third pass, invested their roles with considerable humour, and provided most of the comedy relief to a drama, which took three hours to stage. Appropriate incidental Oriental music was played by the society's orchestra, conducted by Mr. Erich John.

"Lady Precious Stream" will be repeated on August 8 and 15.